

Understanding the Port

Alaska's capital has no road in or out — everything and everyone arrives by water or air, and on cruise days that includes you. The ship ties up at the edge of downtown, a drive-up glacier waits under half an hour away, and the whales are reliable enough that the boats guarantee them.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

The Port Area

Four berths line the waterfront — three put you steps from Franklin Street's shops; the southernmost AJ Dock is about a mile out, with an all-day shuttle into town. On the busiest days an overflow ship may anchor and tender.

Money & Phones

This is America: US dollars, normal cards, and your phone works exactly like it does at home. No roaming, no exchange math — save that energy for the whales.

Getting Around

Downtown is a walking town. Mendenhall Glacier is 25–30 minutes by shuttle or tour bus. Whale boats leave from Auke Bay — tours include the ride. Don't build your day around hailing a car back.

GOOD

Downtown on Foot

Best for: Short stops, easy days, history lovers

- ✓ Franklin Street and the wharf at the gangway
- ✓ Red Dog Saloon's sawdust-floor, gold-rush swagger
- ✓ Free capitol visits on summer weekdays

Low effort, high reward.

BETTER

Mendenhall Glacier & Nugget Falls

Best for: Families, first-timers, photographers

- ✓ A drive-up glacier 25 minutes from the ship
- ✓ Flat two-mile round-trip walk to thundering Nugget Falls
- ✓ Salmon and black bears at Steep Creek in late summer

Pre-book a timed shuttle — peak dates sell out.

BEST

Whales at Auke Bay

Best for: Bucket lists, wildlife lovers, every age

- ✓ Operators are confident enough to guarantee sightings
- ✓ Humpbacks all season — orcas a bonus, never a promise
- ✓ Three to six hours door to door, transfer included

Timing management required. Plan around all aboard.

Top Experiences to Consider

GOOD

Downtown & the Wharf

Walk off the ship into Alaska's most walkable capital: crab shacks, museums, a domeless capitol — and Patsy Ann, the bronze "Official Greeter," still watching the ships come in.

BETTER

Mendenhall Glacier

Juneau's blue giant sits at the edge of its own suburbs. Ride out, walk to Nugget Falls, and listen for the ice. It's retreating fast — locals say see it sooner, not later.

BEST

Whale Watching

Auke Bay's summer humpbacks are the most dependable wildlife show in Alaska — dependable enough that operators put money-back guarantees on seeing one.

Where Staff & Travelers Recommend

The Whale-and-Glacier Combo

One booking, both icons, zero logistics — the day most first-timers should buy.

Tracy's King Crab Shack

Steps from the gangway. Order the bisque, split the legs, thank us later.



Downtown Juneau from the channel — ships dock steps from Franklin Street



Mendenhall Glacier on a classic misty morning — our own photo, honest weather included

Key Considerations

If your Alaska budget has one big swing in it, Juneau is where it goes: helicopter glacier landings and dog-camp mushing up on the icefield. The camps typically run only through August, snow permitting — late-season sailings should book a glacier trek instead — and these sell out first. Book when you book the cruise, not at the pier.

The Goldbelt Tram up Mount Roberts normally boards right beside the berths, but it has been closed for extended repairs — ask us whether it's running for your sailing before you plan around it. And pack the rain shell: this is rainforest, and a "nice" Juneau day often means mist. The glacier looks better in it anyway.



A humpback off Juneau — operators report sightings on the vast majority of summer sailings



The blue you came for — Mendenhall's face across its lake



Salmon stacked in a Southeast creek, late summer — another of our own

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Port Orientation

FROM THE DOWNTOWN BERTHS

● Franklin Street & the Wharf	At the gangway
● Red Dog Saloon	Two blocks up
~ 15 min on foot	
● Alaska State Museum	The state's attic, beautifully kept
● State Capitol	Free tours, summer weekdays
~ 25–30 min by shuttle or tour	
● Mendenhall Glacier & Nugget Falls	Pre-book the timed shuttle
● Glacier Gardens	Rainforest by covered cart
● Auke Bay whale docks	Tours include the transfer
By floatplane	
● Taku Lodge Flight & Feast	Five glaciers and a 1923 lodge

DON'T FORGET

Confirm your all aboard time — and the last tender back, if your ship tenders — before you leave the ship.

Set a phone alarm. The ship will not wait for you.

Key Takeaway

Juneau is the easy superlative: a capital city where the glacier is a shuttle ride, the whales come with guarantees, and the sidewalks end at wilderness.

Walk it, cruise it, or fly over it — this is the day Alaska shows off.

ETA will help you choose the right experience based on your travel style.

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Did You Know?

No Roads Lead Here. Alaska's capital has no road in or out — every resident, visitor, and grocery arrives by water or air. The local roads simply dead-end at the wilderness.

Bigger Than Delaware. The City and Borough of Juneau sprawls across more territory than the entire state of Delaware — one of the largest municipal footprints in America.

The Deaf Dog Who Heard Ships. Though deaf from birth, bull terrier Patsy Ann somehow sensed every arriving ship — the mayor proclaimed her Juneau's "Official Greeter" in 1934, and her bronze statue still holds the post on the wharf.

See It Sooner. Scientists report Mendenhall has now pulled back out of its own lake as it retreats — one more reason locals tell visitors not to save the glacier for "next time."

Gold First, Capital Later. Prospectors Joe Juneau and Richard Harris — guided by Tlingit leader Chief Kowee — struck gold here in 1880. The mining camp took the capital from Sitka by 1906.